

I think coming here to Washington, DC, and finding the massive bureaucracy—in some cases, dysfunction—that surrounds this city, there can be a lot of disillusionment at times for people across the country. I think the new Senator from South Dakota is going to be a great voice, a clear voice on solutions for how to break through that. He will be a great partner and someone I look forward to continuing to work with. We worked together a lot during his time as Governor and while in the State legislature, but I am delighted he is here in the Senate, where he can take his skills and experience and the passion he has to bring about positive change for our country and put it to work on behalf of the people of South Dakota and the people of our country.

I look forward to working with him on the very issue he talked about today because there is probably nothing right now that has a greater economic impact and creates more economic harm for the people we represent in South Dakota than regulatory overreach. This is evidenced on an almost daily basis as new regulations emanate from various agencies around this town that make it more difficult and more expensive for people to create jobs, more difficult for farmers and ranchers and small business people to do the things they do best, and just create a higher burden, a higher level of harm for people across the State because everything that comes out of Washington, DC, that drives up the cost of doing business in this country gets passed on to consumers in our State and all across the country.

I congratulate the Senator from South Dakota on his remarks and am grateful for his great service to our State in so many ways already and now adding to that here as a Member of the Senate, where we have big problems, big challenges, but he meets that with not only big enthusiasm but big experience when it comes to knocking down these barriers and making it more possible for people in this country to live more prosperous lives, safer lives, and hopefully more fulfilled lives when they can get government out of the way and allow their greatest aspirations to surface.

So I hope we have the opportunity to deal with a lot of those issues and do it in a way that creates greater prosperity for people across South Dakota and across this country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, let me observe that after hearing all the Senator from South Dakota said and what his goals are, he sure chose the right committee, the committee I chair, the Environment and Public Works Committee. That is what we talk about. That is what we do.

I had the honor of being in South Dakota before the election, and as I walked around in South Dakota and looked around, I thought, I could just

as well be in Oklahoma. While I was there, I talked to the farm bureau people there, and they said it is the regulations. That is a farm State. Oklahoma is a farm State, and we understand that.

Of all the regulations they have and the problems they have, they say the EPA overregulates and causes the greatest problems. They singled one out—endangered species. They singled another one out—the waters of the United States. Currently, we are doing legislation on the waters of the United States, and it is legislation that is going to get that burden off of the people from South Dakota and Oklahoma. Right now, we are considering the most expensive of all the regulations, which is the ozone regulations. It would constitute the greatest single increase in expenditures or taxes of anything in the history of this country.

So it is nice to know we have someone who is so committed to the goals of this committee to be singling this out in a maiden speech as his greatest concern. I appreciate that as the chairman of that committee, and we are going to do wonderful things together for South Dakota, Oklahoma, and America.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DROUGHT AND WILDFIRES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, this afternoon I wish to call attention to the severe drought and wildfires that are already burning in my home State of Oregon and across the West.

Earlier today, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, on which I serve, held a hearing on drought. There is no question that communities in many of our Western States are experiencing very uncertain times. Our farmers are concerned about water for their crops. Outdoorsmen and business owners fear low reservoir and river levels are going to ruin the summer season. Conservationists worry about a lack of cold water for fish habitats.

Drought and fire are a dangerous combination and create a trend continuing this year. Fire seasons have gotten drier. The fires have gotten hotter, and they have become far more expensive to fight. And severe drought is now compounding the crisis. We ought to make no mistake about what is going on in the West. The West is now bone dry, and the tragic fact is that

this is the new normal for Oregon farmers and ranchers. Water is an increasingly scarce and precious resource.

Right now, every last square mile of Oregon is experiencing abnormally dry conditions, and almost 70 percent of my State is under severe drought. Fifteen of Oregon's 36 counties have declared drought emergencies or have been declared a drought emergency by the Governor. The unusually warm winter in my home State meant record low snowpack, which devastates summertime runoff, which is so important to Oregon's water supply.

Drought raises enormous issues for communities and State and Federal agencies. They have to find ways to cope while using less water. Authorities feel they are in a position, or are forced into a position, to have to make seemingly impossible choices about where to dedicate increasingly scarce resources. All of these rural communities have to face challenges that are heightened by drought—particularly the threat of wildfires.

Drought conditions mean that western forests and grasslands are especially likely to go up in flames. It means that more acres will burn, more people and more structures will be at risk, and more funds are going to be needed to put the fires out.

Fire season this year has started earlier than normal. In fact, I received a fire briefing at home this March. That is the earliest I have had a fire briefing in all of my time in Congress. It certainly bodes badly for the extra costs that we are likely to see. I recently got a letter from the Forest Service with the estimate of anticipated wildfire suppression costs for fiscal year 2015. The middle-of-the-road estimate for how much it will cost to fight wildfires is nearly \$1.25 billion. On the high end, it could cost more than \$1.6 billion. But the funding, however, that has been dedicated to fighting fires does not come close—not close—to covering those costs. The appropriated amount is \$200 million less than even the most conservative median forecast. Wishful thinking in the budget is not going to be very useful in putting the fires out. Fighting fires costs money, and it can't be punted into the future like some minor budget line item. Once again, then, we are looking at the prospect of the Forest Service having to raid other accounts in order to put out the blazes.

According to the Forest Service, in 2013, \$40 million was essentially stolen from the National Forest Fund, which would pay for the stewardship and management of the 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands. And \$30 million was stolen from the account that funds the disposal of brush and other debris from timber operations. This brush and debris is essentially fuel for future fires.

Those figures represent the stark reality that the broken funding system in place is shortchanging the resources needed for sensibly fighting wildfires.

The cycle of stealing money from prevention accounts to pay for suppression of forest fires just repeats itself again and again without end, and it will continue until this funding problem is finally fixed.

Senator CRAPO, our colleague from Idaho, and I have been working on a bipartisan basis to fix this flawed policy for quite some time now. He and I introduced the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act to end this damaging cycle, which I have described and which in the West we call fire borrowing. Our bill would raise the Federal disaster cap to allow the agencies to treat wildfire-fighting efforts like other natural disasters because wildfires are natural disasters, destructive and costly, no different than hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes.

When our governmental agencies are forced to borrow from other accounts to fight fires that have bankrupted these accounts for fire suppression, they rob from the funds that are needed to reduce hazardous fuels in the forests, which leads to even more choked and overstocked forests ripe for future fires.

In effect, what happens is the prevention funds—the funds for thinning, cleaning out all of that debris—get shorted. So then you might have a lightning strike or something in our part of the world and you have an inferno on your hands. The government, in effect, borrows from the prevention fund to put the fire out, and the problem just gets worse and worse. It is that problem that Senator CRAPO and I are trying to fix.

On a bipartisan basis, we seek to give the agencies the tools they need to support the courageous firefighters on the ground, men and women who put their lives at risk to ensure that Americans, their homes and communities are protected from destructive wildfires.

I know there are other Members of the Senate who are very interested in solving the fire-borrowing problem. I encourage all those Members to work with me, Senator CRAPO, and our staff to find a solution that is acceptable to Congress and can be passed soon.

This is an urgent matter. This is not something you can sort of let go and offer the amendment to the amendment to the amendment, the kind of thing that happens here, and it just gets shunted off for years on end. This is urgent business because the West has to be in a position to clear these hazardous fuels and get out in front of these increasingly dangerous and ominous fires. We have to end—we have to end this cycle of catastrophic wildfires in the West. It is long past time for action. I urge colleagues to join Senator CRAPO and I to work with us and our staff so this body moves, and moves quickly, to fix this problem.

There is an awful lot of uncertainty when it comes to calculating the Federal budget. But what we know for sure—for sure—is that this problem of wildfires in the West is getting increasingly serious. The fires are bigger, the

fires are hotter, and they last longer. It is time to budget for reducing this problem in a sensible way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GEORGE SCHENK, CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF FLATBREAD

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I wish to recognize George Schenk, founder of one of Vermont's most beloved restaurants, American Flatbread. Thirty years ago, American Flatbread was built from the ground up, driven by George's own enthusiasm, innovation, and drive. He baked his first pizza—flatbread as he prefers to call it—in a wood-fired stone oven of his own design. Today, American Flatbread still bakes its creations in the same stone ovens.

George started with a vision where his food was not just great tasting and nutritional, but also nurturing and healing the soul. He accomplished that and so much more. Anyone who has sat down at American Flatbread after a long day hiking, skiing or even just to visit understands the satisfaction of eating at George's restaurant. He and his staff maintain a commitment to the core values of the integrity of a meal, using organic and locally sourced ingredients, including those grown in a greenhouse next door. George cultivates these ingredients to deliver on his promise of "good, flavorful, nutritious food that gives both joy and health."

American Flatbread also reflects the best of Vermont's community traditions—caring for one another. Food is often given to help local hospitals and families in need, and those same citizens give back when they can. Like many Vermont towns, Waitsfield was devastated by Tropical Storm Irene, and among the damaged businesses was American Flatbread. Despite the damage, they were able to reopen in just a few short days thanks to the work of hundreds of local volunteers in both their time and in donations.

Since the fire was lit in that first stone oven, George has stayed true to his vision of a sustainable and community-oriented business, one that has flourished while calling Vermont its home. In honor of American Flatbread turning 30, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD Sally Polak's story from the May 28, 2015, edition of the Burlington Free Press.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, May 28, 2015]

AMERICAN FLATBREAD TURNS 30, THROWS COMMUNITY PARTY

WAITSFIELD.—Thirty years ago in his side yard in Warren, George Schenk made a pizza in his wood-fired field stone oven.

The toppings were simple: olive oil, garlic, Parmesan and herbs from his garden.

"I didn't know if it was going to stick to the rock," Schenk said. "I didn't know if it was going to bake. The oven had no door."

Two couples who were hanging out drinking wine shared that pizza, or flatbread in Schenk vernacular.

Their response was like a wave at a football stadium on a smaller scale, Schenk said. Smiles moved from face to face.

"We just thought it was great," said Lyndon Virkler, dean of education at New England Culinary Institute, who was one of the original flatbread eaters. "Because of the nice hot rock it had a nice, crisp crust. And real simple, pure flavors."

What was meant to be a side dish became the "highlight of the evening," Virkler said. He had met Schenk—a ski bum—five years earlier in the kitchen at Sam Rupert's, a Warren restaurant. Virkler was chef and Schenk was a salad maker with creativity and drive, Virkler said.

"We've often reflected on our place in history," Virkler said. "My wife and I being able to sample the first flatbread."

Schenk knew that night 30 years ago he had made something he and other people enjoyed eating. Beyond that, he found something that was gratifying to make: from building the oven to splitting wood and making a fire to kneading the dough.

"I was looking for a professional cooking opportunity that felt right," Schenk said. "Not necessarily being on a line behind closed doors."

Schenk's pizza—American Flatbread—has been around ever since: never behind closed doors and often outside. It started once a week at Tucker Hill Inn before Schenck opened American Flatbread at Lareau Farm in Waitsfield in 1992. That restaurant spawned a dozen American Flatbreads in New England, one in Hawaii and one in British Columbia.

American Flatbread will be available to all next Saturday, when Schenk celebrates 30 years of flatbread with free pizza and salad at his Waitsfield restaurant. Bigger than the birthday party, the event is to recognize community members who give to their communities in a variety of ways, he said.

"It's the whole range of human experience," Schenk said, listing the spheres of people and organizations he intends to honor: religious, local government, volunteer fire and ambulance personnel, people who serve seniors and the ill and injured, those who are involved in the arts and work to protect the environment.

"Here in this small valley there are 54 registered nonprofits," Schenk said.

Schenk spoke of the help his business received after two floods—in 1998 and 2011—damaged the restaurant and grounds at Lareau Farm, site of American Flatbread.

"Over 400 people helped us dig out," Schenk said. "People donated tractors, cleaned firewood, mucked out the basement and moved debris. In the absence of that help, this little business would have failed."

Money also was donated, including a \$25,000 interest-free loan.

"People get really squirrely about money," Schenk said. But this loan was without that kind of attitude. The check came with a post-it note that read: "Thinking of you." When Schenk repaid his last loan installment of \$1,000, the check was returned uncashed, he said.